

Civic Engagement

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Utah State Office of Education
Life Skills, Academic Service Learning



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"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved."

—Helen Keller

Super Citizen

The movie industry seems to have a great interest in the production of superhero movies as of late. Beyond the entertainment value of such cinema, one wonders what messages are being conveyed to the public through these fantastic stories of extraordinary valor and strength in the fight of good over evil.



The superheroes are always endowed with some specific ability far beyond the scope of normal human capacity. It is always hoped that the character possessing the ability is naturally possessed of virtue and personal integrity, although this is not always the case. Often these characters are marketed to children as models of behavior for their play. It is always interesting to discover what specific characteristics and personality attributes are assigned to the characters by their creators and producers.

Character education programs in the schools also stress desirable attributes for our children to develop and possess. I once started to list the character attributes that are promoted by different national, state, and community

organizations. The oath of the Boy Scouts of America states that a scout is "trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent." Character Counts identifies the six major pillars of character as (1) trustworthiness, (2) respect, (3) responsibility, (4) fairness, (5) caring, and (6) citizenship. Numerous other organizations come up with similar lists of traits. My list of character traits evolved into a two-page listing in a couple of hours. The Life Skills document defines character as the "acquisition, internalization and application of commonly held and time-honored principles which promote optimal personal growth, establish an upright citizenry, and support the common good."

So what character attributes and principles are the most important? How do you determine what to emphasize in teaching, and what methods will be employed to embed the character trait in students? It would seem that one would have to be superhuman to possess all of these traits. How can they be taught so that students possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of upright citizens?

Students must have opportunities to learn character traits through civic engagement activities. Service is the perfect vehicle through which students can learn a wide variety of desirable character traits. Perhaps Marshall McLuhan was indeed right when he stated that the "medium is the message." With proper reflection, service learning teaches character.

2007-2008 Utah Learn and Serve K12 Service Learning Grant Application

Schools and districts are invited to apply for funding for the very effective teaching strategy of service learning. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$15,000 and can go to one or more schools in the district area. Applications must be submitted electronically (e-mail) by **September 7, 2007** for the following school year.

View the details and application at <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/servicelearning/index.htm>. For additional questions regarding the Academic Service Learning grant procedures and guidelines, please contact: Heather Culligan at (801) 538-7557 or heather.culligan@schools.utah.gov.

New Service Learning Specialist at the USOE

Heather Culligan has recently joined the State Office of Education as a service learning specialist. Heather will be working with Alan in administering and managing the Learn and Serve America service learning grants.

Heather spent 3½ years in the Granite School District working with “at-risk” students under a safe and drug-free schools grant. While teaching she had her students heavily engaged in service learning, and can really testify to the benefits of service learning on student achievement. Heather took a one-and-a-half-year break to experience the corporate world as a trainer for a large financial institution. While she enjoyed it greatly, she is excited to be back in education and focusing on teaching strategies she knows firsthand to be effective.

Heather is available to conduct service learning professional development and grant writing training or for general questions and suggestions surrounding service learning. She may be reached by e-mail at heather.culligan@schools.utah.gov or by phone at (801) 538-7557.

Civic Engagement Assessments

Several organizations have produced surveys to measure adult and student civic engagement. A previous issue of **Civic Engagement** identified 19 indicators divided into three categories: (1) civic indicators, (2) electoral indicators, and (3) political voice indicators. Surveys focus on issues such as student participation in service and civic organizations and clubs; political activity; and the ability to express opinions to government officials.

The Civics web site at the State Office of Education (<http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lifeskills/civics.htm>) links to several of these surveys. Many of them are online through UTIPS, and results can be gathered at any given time. The site at <http://www.myutips.org> is a great place to construct and circulate surveys. From the State Office Civics page there is a scholarly selection of questions under “Civics Assessment,” a “Civics Dispositions” survey created from 19 indicators of civic engagement, an “Immigration Test” with questions from the Department of Immigration, and civic engagement surveys from Learn and Serve America and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

Surveys may have limited value when trying to really assess civic engagement. Perhaps the most reliable indicator is the level of community service rendered by the citizens in a town. Students need opportunities to apply learning through service.



Dialogue on Democracy

This year's Dialogue on Democracy will feature Representative Lee Hamilton, a former congressman and participant in the 9-11 Commission and the Iraq Study Group. Representative Hamilton will address teachers and civic representatives at a dinner at Rice-Eccles Stadium on the night of October 30, 2007.

Teachers are also invited to attend a session during the daytime at UEA, where they will be introduced to teaching resources available through the Utah Coalition for Civic, Character and Service Learning.

Funding is available to sponsor teachers at the Dialogue on Democracy dinner. To apply, please call or e-mail Elaine Jones at the State Office at (801) 538-7977, or (elaine.jones@schools.utah.gov). The event promises to be an up-close experience with local and national civic leaders who can provide expertise in political ideas to be taken back to the classroom.

Constitution Day

The law requires that any school receiving federal funding participate in an activity commemorating the creation of the Constitution on or about September 17th of each year. Several resources are posted on the Civics web page at <http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lifeskills/civics.htm> to help you celebrate this great event. Nancy Volmer, Public Information Officer for the Utah State Courts reminds us that the Preamble will be read in the rotunda of the Matheson Courthouse on the 17th. Tours of the court may be arranged following the reading. Teachers who would like to attend the reading and tour the court may contact her at (801) 578-3994, or nancyv@email.utcourts.gov to make arrangements.

What Will He Learn From You?

I watched my child step on the bus today.
He was nervous and frightened and cold.
He would rather have stayed here at home to play
But it's time for his schooling, I'm told.
It is time to learn reading and science and math,
And subjects there are more than few.
He will learn from assignments and lessons and books,
But what will he learn from you?

When my child steps inside of your classroom today,
Will he be lost or feel right at home?
Will he want to run out or feel welcome to stay?
Will his interest be settled or roam?
Will the problems he faces be easy or hard?
Will he learn what to say and to do?
He can memorize facts and procedures and rules,
But what will he learn from you?

I know you have lesson plans written and stored
For the subjects you teach through the year.
You have been well prepared and you're ready to go,
But how will you remove his fear?
You have studied your subjects and know them quite well,
There is little in them that is new.
But as my child studies curricular things,
Just what will he learn from you?

Will he learn to solve problems and reason and think?
With his classmates will he get along?
Will he learn to develop the virtues of right?
Will his attitude lighten with song?
Will he learn to connect with the world where he lives?
And the systems that he should accrue?
Will he learn how to work and to finish a task?
Just what will he learn from you?

When you look for the measures of what he has learned,
And the way he performs on a test,
Please remember he's human and has feelings too,
And he really is trying his best.
Keep in mind that the things that most often remain
Of the lessons you teach that are true,
Are examples you give by the way that you live —
That's what he will learn from you.

—Alan Griffin



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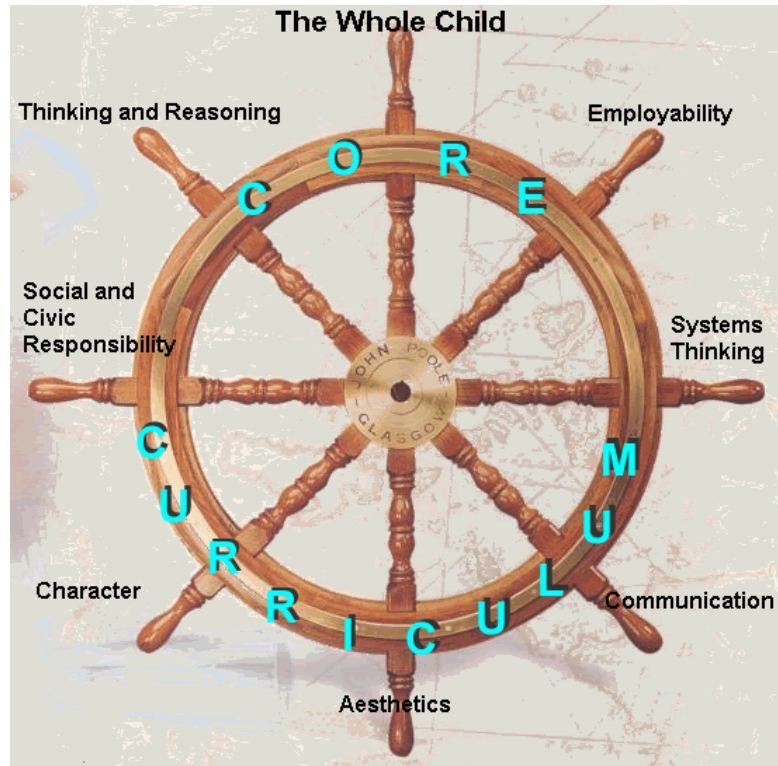
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Character & Civics Education
Events Calendar:
http://www.schools.utah.gov/online/webcalendar.pl?Op=ShowIt&CalendarName=Character_and_Civics_Education

The Life Skills Domain Wheel



Great Web Sites:

Bonner Center for Character Education —

http://education.csufresno.edu/bonnercenter/Character_Education_Links.html

National Alliance for Civic Education — <http://www.cived.net/index.html>

National Center for Learning and Citizenship —

http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/ProjectsPartners/nclc/nclc_main.htm

Create Your Own Newspaper — <http://crayon.net>

Operation Respect — <http://www.operationrespectct.org/song.htm>

The My Hero Project — <http://www.myhero.com/myhero/>

The Utah State Office of Education does not sponsor nor endorse any of the listed sites, but merely suggests them as resources to be used under the careful guidance of a qualified instructor.

USOE Websites:

Character Ed — http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/char_ed/default.htm

Civics — <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/civics/index.htm>

Service Learning — <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/servicelearning/index.htm>

Life Skills — <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/civics/lifeskills/index.htm>